

Knowing and finding love

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There is a story of God's love for the world that I would like to tell to everyone. But it is not easily told. Love requires that everything come out into the open, that everything be what it is. Love has to come from the centre of a person and go to the centre of another person.

In many ways, we steel ourselves against the simple things, the true things, the lasting things, and have a preference for the immediate things, the complex things, the things that have to be done again or improved on because what we had was not real. These things may have been helpful but not love, kind but still not love, useful or interesting or stimulating but not love.

There are obstacles to love flowing freely. Things have happened to us. We had to cope. We sought refuge behind talking, or listening, or making things, or doing things, or going places, or succeeding, or providing. But to do these things, we left something of ourselves behind—some unfinished business, something that couldn't come out into the open. So we moved forward—but not every part of us. There was a division, a severing of what was actually so from what we projected.

Cleverness may tell us what things are and how they work and if they can be changed. But only love can tell us who we are and why.

God is love. This is our 'problem'. God is love and he created us in an outpouring of himself. He is always our origin and goal, our centre, and, most significantly for us, the Word by which we live. If he does not speak to us we are effectively orphans—without a true home in this life or the next. He himself is the love which is our life. God does not have a 'use by' date, or go out of fashion, or wear out or become redundant. If we do not want to have God in our thinking, we live in death rather than life.

The pain of being a human being is very real. Those who do not feel it have decided that it is easier to live with the phantom they have become, or the dreams that may yet come true, or the best of what has now gone, or the imagining of what might have been. But what is this pain? And why is it easier to move away from it than to face it? Are we destined to be forever moving away from our centre rather than be moving out into life—wholly at rest with ourselves and our Creator—and giving from who we really are?

The story of God's love begins with the day he visited us—the day Jesus Christ came to share our history with us. When we say that God is love, it is his Son that we have in mind. We do not think of our pleasant or unpleasant experiences, or the ideas of God we have formed, but, very simply, of Christ. To tell the story of God's love is

more than hard; it is miraculous. It has to be told by Jesus Christ, and he can only tell it by laying down his life.

We must listen to Christ because God gave him to us. There could have been nothing/anything greater that God could give. Life itself is gift enough—just to breathe and to know that God formed us is beyond telling. But he has given us his own Son—his very self, because all his love is focussed on this Son.

What is remarkable is that the Son of God did not speak to the image we made for/of ourselves but to us. He knew our severed self and spoke the word of God. He spoke from his Father so we would hear words that came from communion or participation in God. He spoke words that healed so that we would know that our fractured life was not the whole story. He spoke from the cross where he was executed so that we could know how thoroughly God rejected everthing of what we had become apart from himself. But his words from the cross were not to shut us out.

Strangely, on the cross, we can see ourselves more clearly than if we looked within. Christ's loving deed—as the deed of God—had so encompassed us in our strange and misformed ways, that he was there for us. But he was there, for us, in the presence of God—bearing God's rejection of all that we had become. He was there before God, doing what he was doing for God. And he was received by God. God raised him from the dead to tell us this.

This Son is able to speak the love of God to us. That is, he is able to say it, to be it, to convey it to us. He has never been closed off to the love of his Father, has never needed to hide from what he is. He has received in full what his Father is and knows fully what his Father is about in the creation. What he knows is that his Father is for us—though against what we had made of ourselves apart from him.

Now, we may come out of hiding. God has not only raised Jesus from the dead but recreated our broken humanity. This is not just our new life but our true life. It is this for which we were created. If we receive Jesus Christ, trust in him, hear the word that God has spoken in him, we are children of God. We have been already healed.

Through Christ now, we can change our mind. The place to find love is not by getting closer to our own true self. Our own true self is here—in Christ, on the cross, and raised from the dead. This is the way of God for every human being—the way of love.